

# Latest on COVID-19

GPEI's bi-weekly Situation Report & Donor Update

## MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

- [Associated Press:](#) Pakistan army chief says anti-polio campaign to restart soon
- [Associated Press:](#) COVID-19 just the latest epidemic in areas struck by disease
- [France 24:](#) New polio cases in Afghanistan as coronavirus halts immunisation
- [The New York Times:](#) Slowing the Coronavirus is Speeding the Spread of Other Diseases
- [Reuters:](#) U.S. finds alternative partners to WHO, except for polio: U.S. official
- [Vox:](#) The other infectious diseases spreading

## LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

- [Polio eradication programme continuity: implementation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic:](#) As of May 2020, the GPEI has released an updated guide to help ensure continuity of the programme's operations in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, this guide proposes close coordination and, where feasible, integration of design, planning and delivery of polio eradication activities with the COVID-19 response and delivery of other health services, such as essential immunization. Specifically, the updates describe how to best adapt and manage the polio eradication programme delivery to ensure its alignment with the public health response to COVID-19 at national and sub-national levels, while conducting context appropriate polio eradication activities
- [AFRICA on track for certification of wild poliovirus eradication:](#) This month the independent Africa Regional Certification Commission (ARCC) accepted full documentation of wild polio-free status from the remaining four countries in the African Region, taking the region one step closer to being certified free of wild poliovirus. The final step is for the ARCC to review the final updated annual reports from the remaining 43 countries. The commission is expected to conclude its review and make its final decision by August 2020.

## PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

- More than 2,000 polio response experts from WHO, UNICEF, Rotary, as well as Stop Transmission Of Polio consultants from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are supporting the COVID-19 response in the African Region. A quarter of WHO polio staff are dedicating more than 80% of their time towards COVID-19 efforts.
- **UNICEF:** Polio workers in Afghanistan supporting scale up on routine immunization amidst Covid-19
- **WHO:** To boost diagnosis, the polio laboratory network comprising 16 laboratories in 15 countries is now dedicating 50% of its capacity to COVID-19 testing. Hundreds of tests are carried out every day in Algeria, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa.
- Mobile phone applications originally developed for health workers to use in polio outbreak response and disease surveillance have been adapted for use against COVID-19.
- The GPEI is continuing to lend critical support to protect communities from COVID-19. Building on decades of experience stopping polio outbreaks, GPEI workers and resources in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria and many other countries in Africa and Asia are playing an important role in the fight against COVID-19.



*A little girl washes her hands outside Bakhtan clinic in Surkhrod District, Nangarhar Province, Eastern Afghanistan. GPEI partner UNICEF has installed handwashing points at strategic areas as part of COVID-19 prevention measures*

## AFGHANISTAN

- Team coordination, financing, procurement and activity tracking are being streamlined through an information management system that is being developed by polio personnel for the COVID-19 response.
- In addition to promoting COVID-19 prevention and care practices, the polio communication network is promoting vaccination during the pause of polio campaigns and has referred over 28,809 children for routine immunization services in the past month.

## LIBYA

- Polio labs have supported testing for COVID-19 in 11 labs, including one new lab which started testing for COVID-19 in mid-June.

## PAKISTAN

- Support is being provided by PEI data staff in data entry and data cleaning.
- Community based surveillance for both COVID-19 and polio is being strengthened in lockdown areas. More than 17,000

community members have been oriented by PEI surveillance staff on COVID-19 risk communication and engaged.

- Social media platforms of the Government, UN agencies and the polio programme have collectively reached over 297 million people with accurate information on COVID-19 prevention and care. Nearly 98,000 religious leaders mobilized by UNICEF and partners through existing polio alliances and the health program are actively talking with local communities on the risk of COVID-19 and the importance of physical distancing and hygienic practices for protection against the disease.

- In response to concerns flagged by the recent RCCE (Risk Communication and Community Engagement) brief on the possibility of a spike in COVID-19 cases coinciding with the Eid-ul-Adha celebrations at the end of July, the polio programme is supporting the government in intensifying the promotion of COVID-19 preventive practices among the population.

## SOMALIA

- The WHO supported AFP surveillance network is working

on COVID-19 sample collection, transportation and investigation.

## SUDAN

- Polio staff are supporting COVID-19 surveillance while continuing to provide technical guidance, supporting case investigation and sample transportation.

## SYRIA

- The polio programme, along with the Early Warning Alert and Response System officer, has developed an active surveillance and case search system to track COVID-19 cases. The system was disseminated to all Department of Health offices, and laboratories receive daily updates.
- The polio programme is supporting 124 active surveillance sites that are visited by 30 teams throughout all 13 governorates.

## YEMEN

- COVID-19 sample collection and transportation are taking place using AFP infrastructure and reverse cold chain.

